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ABSTRACT

"Bosstown Sound" was a slogan used to promote several Boston (Massachusetts) rock bands in 1968. In theory, the Bosstown Sound was a logical development to follow the San Francisco "sound," which included the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, and other Bay Area bands that had been commercially successful in 1967. However, Bosstown Sound was not a major commerical success; on the contrary, it became notorious as a failed hype. Whatever excitement the hype originally generated was over within a year. A surprisingly large volume of published materials about Bosstown exists, but it is in farflung places and often hard to locate. Existing archival materials allow for a brief description of the activities of 18 separate bands representing the Bosstown Sound. Future investigations will include interviewing members of these bands to clear up the enigmas in the puzzle that was Bosstown Sound and to contribute to the serious study of rock music. (Fourteen notes are included; a discography is attached.) (RS)

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Back to Bosstown

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Back to Bosstown

Long before there was Milli Vanilli, there was Bosstown. Just as Milli Vanilli offended the fickle sensibilities of the arbiters of pop-music authenticity in 1990, so did the Bosstown Sound ignite a minor moral panic in 1968 and thereafter. Milli Vanilli's sin was to win a Grammy Award for a recording fraudulently passed off as sung by the duo (Robert Pilatus and Fabrice Morvan). The Bosstown Sound was also viewed (both by critics and some participants) as something of a fraud because it was supposedly a fabrication. The interesting thing about Milli Vanilli and Bosstown is that they are both sacrificial lambs, singled out for condemnation while the duplicity of others goes unheralded.

Deception and fraud are hallmarks of the music industry. People who did not write songs are credited with writing them. Records "by" many 1960s bands were actually recorded by studio musicians. Lip-synching, now under attack as a technique in "live" concerts, has long been tolerated in music videos, movies, and many ostensibly-live TV shows. John Lennon, the epitome of the authentic rocker, reportedly said that he wanted Allen Klein to run Apple because the music industry was a crooked business, and Klein was the biggest crook of all.

In order to maintain the appearance that popular music is something worth believing in, as a cause or even a way of life, it is necessary to make occasional, symbolic purges of people and ideas that somehow seem to contaminate the sanctified and sanctimonious moral order of rock culture (or any other musical "art world"). The purges are seldom logical or consistent. They are always subject to dispute if anyone chooses to do so, but still they often have the momentum of a lynch mob, and a corresponding finality. They allow one to believe that a cluster of

worthwhile values exists in rock culture; that these values separate "us" from "them," our enemies or inferiors; and that "we" maintain purity by recognizing and ostracizing fakers. This latter is a process of discrimination, supposedly based upon aesthetic and moral precepts.

The inconsistency of the results is what is at issue here. In the case of Milli Vanilli, there was undoubtedly discrimination, but it was based as much on race and nationality as on aesthetics and morals. Pilatus and Morvan are black Germans plucked out of poverty for stardom by producer Frank Farian. At about the time they were being exposed as frauds (by their producer, for financial reasons), the Byrds (white Americans) were being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Four of the original five Byrds did not play their own instruments on the Byrds' first single. As with Milli Vanilli, the Byrds' noninvolvement with the recording was dictated by the record producer. Despite the similarity of these cases, the Byrds are in the Hall of Fame, and Milli Vanilli is in disgrace.[1] Many other examples could be cited, including the Beatles, the Monkees, and Paul Revere and the Raiders. This is not to belittle the Byrds or the other bands mentioned, but rather to point out the double standard being applied at the expense of Milli Vanilli.

I have discerned a similar injustice in the case of the Bosstown Sound, which I have been studying since 1987.[2] The Bosstown Sound is not only in disgrace, it is also obscure. Few people have heard of it, and all one is likely to hear about it is harsh commentary, tucked away in a few paragraphs in some of the major histories of rock. It is one of the most disreputable subjects imaginable, and I would therefore like to begin the body of this essay by explaining what it is and why I am studying it. Following this, I will summarize my findings to date.

Why Study Bosstown?

"Bosstown Sound" was a slogan used to promote several Boston rock bands in 1968. The variants "Boston Sound" and "Bean Town Sound" were also used. The principal proponents of the slogan were MGM Records and radio station WBZ. To go with the slogan, MGM created a promotional campaign that was embraced by mainstream publications including Billboard, Newsweek, and Vogue. Other record labels jumped on the bandwagon and attached the Bosstown slogan (or its variants) to their own bands from Boston.

In theory, the Bosstown Sound was a logical development to follow the San Francisco "sound," which included the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, and other Bay Area bands that had been commercially successful in 1967. The newly emergent rock press disagreed. The two major publications, Rolling Stone (based in San Francisco) and Crawdaddy (based in Boston), both printed attacks that suggested the Bosstown Sound did not exist. Reviews of the first wave of Bosstown records were generally negative. Sales were sluggish. The closest thing to a hit to come out of the entire Bosstown oeuvre was "Can't Find the Time," by Orpheus, which achieved only modest success. The Bosstown albums also fared poorly, especially after the initial group of releases.

MGM announced the Bosstown Sound in a Billboard ad on January 20, 1968. It was to be "the sound heard 'round the world."[3] However, Bosstown was not a major commercial success and, on the contrary, became notorious as a failed hype. The name "Bosstown" became a term of derision. Whatever excitement the hype originally generated was over within a year. The bands involved had had a brief period of opportunity, and when it

disappeared, so did they, and rather quickly.

My first encounter with Bosstown occurred when I bought records by Ultimate Spinach, the Ill Wind, and the Beacon Street Union in 1968. At that time, I was 16. I did not know these bands were from Boston or part of any movement or hype. To my knowledge, I did not become aware of the phrase "Bosstown Sound" until much later, possibly as late as the late 1970s when I read Chapple and Garofalo.[4] Meanwhile, I had lived in Boston for most of 1973 and had heard news of local bands such as Aerosmith, Seatrain, and J. Geils, but not any of the Bosstown bands.

As an adult, I remained intrigued by the music of my adolescence. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, I was pleased to discover more and more sources of old recordings and information about them. But as my education and university career progressed, I became more aware than ever that my favorite music was poorly chronicled and not taken seriously. The importance of rock music as a research topic is self-evident to me, but eventually I realized that platitudes about freedom of inquiry have only limited applicability in the highly charged atmosphere of university politics.

Studying rock music and defending its worth as an object of study have become something of a crusade for me, even though I have not always been able to devote as much time to it as I would like. In 1987, I felt ready to embark on a new study of rock, and one of my goals was to specialize. If a biologist can study wasp saliva (and at least one biologist does, and for very good reasons), then, I thought, I can with equal validity study a highly specialized topic in rock. It seemed to me that this was not being done much and that more studies of this sort were needed. I considered several narrow topics before settling on Bosstown.

Several things about Bosstown puzzled me and made the topic attractive. There had, by this time, been a revival of interest, among record collectors, in Boston punk-type bands from the late 1960s, including the Remains, the Barbarians, and others even more obscure. History books and record collector magazine articles were also, by then, displaying a quite forgiving attitude toward bubblegum rock, the Monkees, teen idols, and other 1960s shlock traditionally disdained by the rock intelligentsia. Bosstown, however, was not included in the punk revival and had not been forgiven.

I wondered why. Having listened to five Bosstown albums by then, I thought the music was not bad, and definitely no worse than much of what was being rereleased on record and rehashed in various hagiographic writings.

As a piece of hype, Bosstown also did not seem exceptional. Consider, as a comparison case, Moby Grape, who emerged from San Francisco in 1967. On the cover of their first album, drummer Don Stevenson gives us the finger. Columbia ostentatiously released five singles simultaneously from the album (none were hits). The second album (Wow) featured one track recorded at 78 rpm, which required the listener to change speeds on the phonograph. The album came packaged with a "bonus disc" of studio jamming (Grape Jam) with guests Al Kooper and Mike Bloomfield. The liner notes to their third album contained a thinly-veiled apology for the hype and gimmickry of the first two albums. Moby Grape has been forgiven for this hype (which, like Bosstown, is usually blamed on the record company) and is widely regarded as one of the classic rock bands.

Nor was Bosstown unusual as a slogan or campaign. Many other record labels ran similar campaigns at about the same time. An example is RCA's "Groupquake," an ad for which encompassed eight disparate bands in May 1968.[5]

Bosstown actually made more sense than some of these other promotions in that the bands were at least all from the city identified in the slogan.

I also wondered exactly what the Bosstown Sound was. The main published works focused on MGM Records and three of its acts (Ultimate Spinach, Orpheus, and the Beacon Street Union), but suggested that others, perhaps many others, were also involved. Here was an interesting historical problem--to define a phenomenon that, in theory at least, ought to have rather definite, although heretofore unspecified, boundaries. I looked forward to the methodological challenge of trying to find out exactly what happened and what difference it made in the lives of the participants.

I thought this would be a brief project, but it has turned out not to be. I began with a rather abstract interest in the subject, studying it because it was infamous but had not been studied or even delineated. I quickly began to see Bosstown, additionally, as a human interest story that might reveal much about the music industry, the lives of musicians, and popular conceptions of stardom, success, and authenticity.

From the outset, my goal has been to say everything about Bosstown that needs to be said. Originally, I thought this would not be much. By now, it is hard for me to know where to stop in the collection of materials and information, and I feel that I have hardly even begun to reach adequate conclusions based on the incomplete data at my disposal. So far, I have concentrated on trying to acquire all published works about Bosstown and related subjects, and all relevant recordings. I would still maintain that "Bosstown" is a clear-cut rubric as compared with many others, but its periphery is fuzzier and more far-reaching than I expected. Many more

people were involved, or possibly-involved, with Bosstown than I realized. Crosschecking credits on various albums has created an ever-wider net of recordings to investigate. It is hard to find out whether some of these even exist, let alone have any connection with Bosstown. A surprisingly large volume of published material about Bosstown exists, but it is in farflung places and often hard to locate. Almost none of it is indexed anywhere. Some of it is contradictory or erroneous, and much of it is cryptic.

Once I feel that I have charted this territory sufficiently, which should be soon, I would like to interview as many Bosstown survivors as I can find. What I expect to hear from the musicians--and I base this on published interviews both old and recent--is bitterness toward the record companies and hype that they feel disrupted or destroyed their careers.

I am interested in the odd details of Bosstown for their own sake. Each detail was, momentarily at least, extremely important to somebody. As the details accumulate, a larger puzzle becomes visible--fairly good music, excluded then and now from the rock canon, promoted with great controversy as the sound of one city, buried ignominiously and fast to clear the way for other bands and other hypes. So far, I believe I can explain parts of this puzzle, but parts of it remain an enigma that I hope to understand better after talking with Bosstown participants.

Selected Findings

In this section, I will summarize what I know and suspect about the Bosstown Sound and its context. Much of this I have previously reported, but I will be particularly concerned here with the correction of old mistakes and the presentation of new details.

Roots of Bosstown

The earliest mention I have found of any Bosstown bands is in the first issue of Avatar, a Boston underground newspaper. The issue is dated June 9-22, 1967, and carries an ad promoting the appearance of the Hallucinations and the Ill Wind at the Boston Tea Party, a psychedelic club that had opened a few months earlier.[6] This and other ads belie the notion of some critics that there was no Boston rock scene.

There was, in fact, an active psychedelic rock scene including at least a half-dozen clubs and a couple dozen bands in addition to those who made records. There were at least two underground publications to chronicle this scene--Vibrations, which dealt exclusively with music, and Avatar, associated with folk musician and guru Mel Lyman, which had a much broader range of subject matter. Unfortunately, Vibrations is not a very good source of information about Boston bands, because it usually focused more on national and international acts such as the Yardbirds and the Who. Avatar, though it had less coverage of music in general, paid more attention to local music and is a good historical reference.

In addition to the psychedelic rock scene, which spawned at least part of the Bosstown Sound, there was the famous Cambridge folk scene. This reached its peak in the mid 1960s and was centered around the Club 47, which closed in April 1968.

There were also punk bands (as we would call them today) in the Boston area. Their heyday ended shortly before the Bosstown Sound began.

I previously reported that the psychedelic (Bosstown), folk, and punk scenes had very little connection with each other. I would still say this, although I now know of a few more examples. The main Bosstown-folk connections are in the bands Earth Opera, Orpheus, and the Hallucinations.

All four members of the original Orpheus and at least three members of Earth Opera (Peter Rowan, David Grisman, and John Nagy) were reportedly veteran folk musicians. Peter Wolf, lead singer of the Hallucinations, had started as a folkie. The Ill Wind was a Bosstown band that played folk-rock, but I am not aware of any connection between them and the Cambridge folk scene. The Big Three are listed in some accounts as a Bosstown band. This apparently refers to the folk trio of Cass Elliot (later of the Mamas and the Papas), James Hendricks, and Tim Rose. To my knowledge, this act was based in New York and had disbanded by 1965.

The major punk bands from the Boston area included the Remains, the Barbarians, the Lost, the Rockin' Ramrods (aka the Ramrods), Teddy and the Pandas, the Improper Bostonians, Monday's Mondos, the Ones, the North Atlantic Invasion Force (aka the n.a.i.f.), the Rising Storm, and Georgie Porgie and the Cry Babies. Several of these have connections with Bosstown. The Rockin' Ramrods became Puff, a Bosstown band. All five members of the Lost later played in Bosstown bands (Willie Alexander and Lee Mason in the Bagatelle, Ted Myers and Kyle Garrahan in Chamaeleon Church, Myers in Ultimate Spinach, Alexander and Walter Powers in the Grass Menagerie, and Powers in Listening). Teddy and the Pandas began as a poppish punk band and continued during the Bosstown era with punkish pop. The Improper Bostonians and the Ones are sometimes named as Bosstown bands, but I would classify them as punk bands from a slightly earlier time. The Wildweeds are sometimes classified as Bosstown or punk, but they came from Hartford and were primarily a country-rock band (whose leader was Al Anderson, later of NRBQ). The Remains' drummer, N.D. Smart II, later played with Kangaroo during the Bosstown period. I think Kangaroo was not a Bosstown band, but I am still checking. Remains guitarist Vern Miller later played with Swallow,

a Boston-based band that issued albums in 1972 and 1973.

Other acts I am still investigating include the Pandoras, Steve Colt, Quill, and the Colwell-Winfield Blues Band.

Once Bosstown ended, relatively few of the musicians involved issued subsequent recordings. I will note the ones of which I am aware in the listing of bands below. I have discovered several more cases since my earlier report.

The Sounds of the Bosstown Sound

Musically, the Bosstown Sound was quite a mixed bag, although folk was a pronounced influence. Any vestiges of punk were dulled by studio-pop packaging--and, above all, the Bosstown Sound was intended to be commercial music. Still, the ingredients of this sound were diverse, including a fair measure of psychedelic and hard rock, plus some jazz, gospel, classical, and of course folk.

Unfortunately, the national promotion of a Boston "sound" was largely out of sync with local club activity. Some of the Bosstown bands did not even meet each other until they toured nationally. It is also telling that most of the Bosstown bands had little or no previous experience recording for local or regional labels. Many of the Boston-area punk bands had released records on local labels, but the Bosstown Sound was dominated by national labels, who in most cases used New York-based producers.

Despite these impediments, the recorded legacy of the Bosstown Sound is fairly impressive. Contrary to the standard view, there were many bands involved. They issued dozens of singles and LPs on numerous labels. The records are surprisingly good and in most cases have aged well, although they had very little success on the national charts. Listed alphabetically below are the bands of the Bosstown Sound. I have included all the Boston bands I am aware of who released records in early

1968, or who were mentioned in Bosstown Sound publicity, or who seem otherwise connected with the phenomenon. Unless otherwise indicated, the records did not appear on the Billboard charts.

The Apple Pie Motherhood Band

The Apple Pie Motherhood Band had previously been known as the Sacred Mushrooms, and before that as C.C. and the Chasers. As the Apple Pie Motherhood Band, they issued their eponymous first album on Atlantic in the summer of 1968, with Jeff Labes on keyboards, Ted Demos on lead guitar, Joe Castagno on rhythm guitar, Jack Bruno on drums, and Richard Barnaby on bass. A second Atlantic album called Apple Pie followed about a year later, with Castagno out. Bruce Paine was added on vocals, Adam Myers on harmonica and vocals, and Michael Sorafine on guitar and vocals. A single, released before the first album, features what sounds like a female vocalist. One side of the single appears on the first album, with a different, male vocal.

While the first album has various psychedelic trappings, the second dispenses with these in favor of hard rock. The band played and sang well but were uneven as songwriters. They were at their best when performing others' material or when jamming. Jeff Labes later played with Boston folksinger Jonathan Edwards (who recorded "Sunshine") and with Bonnie Raitt.

The Bagatelle

The Bagatelle was an interracial band (five whites, four blacks) that mixed jazz arrangements, horn-based soul, and doowop- and gospel-style vocal group harmony. The band consisted of vocalists Fred Griffith, Rodney Young, and David "Redtop" Thomas, and Willie Alexander (vocals,

piano, percussion), Lee Mason (drums), Steve Schrell (saxophone, flute), Mark Gould (trumpet), David "Turk" Bynoe (bass), and Marshall O'Connor (guitar).. Alexander, sometimes nicknamed "Loco," later played with the Velvet Underground and the Boom-Boom Band.

In the summer of 1968, the Bagatelle released their only album, 11 PM Saturday. It is a live album, recorded in New York and produced by the late Tom Wilson. This was clearly an exciting live band, but the production of the album does not always do justice to the performances. No songwriting credits are included on the album, but most of the songs are covers.

ABC Records released one single by the Bagatelle. Billboard reported in July 1968 that the band was scheduled to appear in a movie called Parachute to Paradise, directed by Allan Gitler.[8] I have been unable to find any evidence that such a film was ever released.

The Beacon Street Union

The Beacon Street Union consisted of John Lincoln Wright (vocals), Robert Rhodes (keyboards, brass), Richard Weisberg (percussion), Wayne Ulaky (bass), and Paul Tartachny (drums). They had a reputation as a good live band that never quite clicked in the studio. Part of the problem may have been that the Beacon Street Union was basically a hard rock band, but their producer was Wes Farrell, best known for the bubblegum hit "Come On Down to My Boat" and for his later work with the Partridge Family. In any case, the Beacon Street Union's two albums contain more than their share of studio gimmickry and pseudo-profundity, but also plenty of hard rock, often with punk and blues flavorings.

Their first album, The Eyes of the Beacon Street Union, entered the

Billboard album chart on March 9, 1968, and stayed for 16 weeks, peaking at #75. With a gatefold cover and a portentous "Recitation" as its first track, this almost seems to be a concept album, although it is hard to say what the concept is. The first Beacon Street Union single, "South End Incident," which depicted a mugging, brought the band some notoriety and was "banned in Boston." At about this time, the band reportedly appeared in a promotional telefilm similar to a music video.[9]

The Beacon Street Union's second album, The Clown Died in Marvin Gardens, reached #173 on the album chart in the fall of 1968. Like the first album, it is a mixture of straightforward rock and conceptual material. "Blue Suede Shoes," from the new album, was released as the band's second single. It received some airplay but did not reach the charts.

MGM issued a final single, "Mayola," shich also failed to catch on. Another single followed on the RTP label. Then, in 1970, the Beacon Street Union regrouped as Eagle, with Wright (vocals), Weisberg (drums), Ulaky (guitar), and Bobby Hastings (bass). Once again, Wes Farrell was the producer. Eagle released one album, Come Under Nancy's Tent, on Janus. Two singles (including one non-LP track) were also released. Wright said in an interview that Janus released the album before it was finished, using a reference vocal track with no overdubbing.[10] Eagle does not sound much like the Beacon Street Union. The rock has a harder edge, and, for better or worse, there is no conceptual material.

Bead Game

Bead Game was mentioned in articles about the Bosstown Sound but did not release a record until much later. Not surprisingly, their album, Welcome, sounds quite different from most other Bosstown records.

The members of Bead Game were K. Westland Haag (rhythm guitar), John Sheldon (lead guitar), Jim Hodder (drums, lead vocals), R. Gass (keyboard), and Lassie Sachs (bass). The band was based in Cambridge and played mostly heavy, progressive rock, with odd time signatures, a full organ sound, and occasional echoes of Jimi Hendrix. A non-LP single, "Sweet Medusa," was also released. This song was drawn from the film The People Next Door and has more of a pop sound than does the album.

Bo Grumpus

Bo Grumpus was Ed Mottau (guitar), Joe Hutchinson (guitar, bass, piano), Jim Colegrove (bass, guitar), and Ronnie Blake (drums). Vocals are not credited on their first album, Before the War, released on Atco in the summer of 1968. Felix Pappalardi was the producer. The album is pleasant studio pop with good vocal harmonies and often a folk touch. The songs are catchy originals.

The band changed their name to Jolliver Arkansaw and released an album called Home in 1969, again with Pappalardi producing. All band members except Blake are credited as singers, and Pappalardi's protege Leslie West also plays on the album. Home has a harder edge than Before the War and, not surprisingly, often sounds a bit like Mountain, the later Pappalardi-West aggregation. A single was released from Home, but neither it nor either of the albums went anywhere. Colegrove released a solo album in 1978. Before that, he played with John Hall (of Kangaroo and Orleans) and in a band called Hungry Chuck (with N.D. Smart).

Chamaeleon Church

Chamaeleon Church released an eponymous album and a single on MGM

in the summer of 1968. The most notable fact about the band was that Chevy Chase, who later achieved fame as a comedian, was their drummer. Besides Chase, the band included Ted Myers (vocals, guitar), Tony Scheuren (vocals, guitar, bass, harpsichord), and Kyle Garrahan (vocals, bass, guitar, piano). Alan Lorber was their producer. The album is a pleasant but rather bland collection of studio pop, with occasional folk-rock and psychedelic flourishes. All the songs on the album were written by band members (but none by Chase). Myers and Scheuren played later with Ultimate Spinach. Garrahan later released three albums and a single as a solo artist.

Timothy Clover

A curious artifact from spring 1968 is the album A Harvard Square Affair, which is either by a person called Timothy Clover, or by a band called the Cambridge Concept of Timothy Clover. It is hard to tell from the album cover and label. A single drawn from the album is credited to Timothy Clover. However, the album also contains a song titled "Timothy Clover," and the album is dedicated, by "The Producers" (not by the artist), to "all the people who 'believe' in Timothy Clover." These and other fishy details suggest the strong possibility that Timothy Clover was not a person and that the album is a studio fabrication. The album was produced by Bruce Patch and Lennie Petze, with Larry Jaspon as executive producer. These three wrote most of the songs, and nobody named Clover is credited with anything (although an earnest-looking young troubador is pictured on the cover). The front cover labels the album part of "The Bean Town Sound."

The album also sounds like a studio confection, and a flimsy one at that. The songs are generally silly and not very well sung. The production

sounds similar--but inferior--to that of Teddy and the Pandas' album done for the same label (Tower) by many of the same people later that year. The Clover album has all the earmarks of a rush-job designed to take timely advantage of the Bosstown hype.

Earth Opera

Earth Opera was one of the few Bosstown bands to receive generally favorable reviews. They consisted of Peter Rowan, David Grisman, John Nagy, Bill Stevenson, and Paul Dillon. All played several instruments, but the basic lineup was Rowan on guitar and vocals, Grisman on mandolin, Nagy on bass, Stevenson on keyboards, and Dillon on drums. Stevenson appeared only on their first album.

Despite their psychedelic album covers, Earth Opera played mostly country-rock and folk-rock, with touches of jazz and occasionally a harder rock sound. They were probably the most folk-oriented of the Bosstown bands.

Earth Opera's eponymous first album, released in March 1968 on Elektra, is folky, ethereal, and lilting. One cut, "The Red Sox Are Winning," reportedly became quite popular in Boston.

The second album, released about a year later, was called <u>The Great American Eagle Tragedy</u>. It spent four weeks on the album chart in spring 1969, peaking at #181. The most notable feature of the album is "The American Eagle Tragedy," a ponderous, 11-minute anti-war opus with numerous changes in tempo and time signature. This piece has not aged well, and the album's interest today lies more in other selections like the rocking "Sanctuary from the Law" and the laid-back "Home to You."

Elektra released two singles from the second album--"The American Eagle Tragedy" (abbreviated, but still too long at seven minutes) and

"Home to You." The latter was #97 for one week on the Hot 100.

Dillon, Nagy, and Grisman also backed up Tom Paxton on his 1968 album Morning Again. Rowan, who wrote almost all of Earth Opera's songs, played with Seatrain in the early 1970s and later with the Rowan Brothers. Grisman has played on many records as a mandolinist.

Eden's Children

Eden's Children were a power trio featuring Richard "Sham" Schamach on guitar and vocals, Larry Kiley on bass (spelled Kiely on their second album), and Jim Sturman on drums. The band was produced by jazz producer Bob Thiele (with Jonathan Whitcup co-producing the second album). Liner notes on both their albums emphasized the band's jazz tendencies.

Schamach came from Denver; Sturman from Bays Village, Ohio; and Kiley from Marblehead, Massachusetts. They began as a quintet, had some personnel turnovers, and played together as a trio about six months before releasing their first album.[11] Kiley left the band briefly around this time and was replaced during the interim by Rusty Marcus.

Eden's Children's eponymous debut album appears to be the first album released by a Bosstown band. It spent two weeks on the Billboard chart in March 1968, reaching #196. ABC released a single from the album, but it went nowhere. A follow-up album, Sure Looks Real, also did not catch on, and nothing further was heard from the band.

Eden's Children, like the Bagatelle and Earth Opera, were well regarded by critics, in contrast with most other Bosstown bands. Richard Schamach's guitar playing was somewhat legendary, and the jazz orientation gave them an aura of seriousness, even though much of what they played was straight-ahead rock. On their second album, they even took on a bit of a pop sound. Schamach wrote most of the band's songs.

Groundspeed

Cambridge-based Groundspeed released a single in the summer of 1968 that was praised in Vibrations.[12] "L-12-East" and "In a Dream" were both heavy psychedelic numbers written by Robert Telson, with folk tinges and discordant organ. I have no further information about this band.

The Ill Wind

Boston folk-rock reached an artistic pinnacle with the Ill Wind's only album, Flashes, released on ABC in the summer of 1968. The Cambridge-based Ill Wind was Ken Frankel (lead guitar, banjo), Richard Griggs (rhythm guitar, vocals), Carey Mann (bass, vocals), David Kinsman (drums), and Connie Devanney (vocals). Tom Wilson produced the album. Ken and Tom Frankel wrote most of the songs.

The album's greatest asset is Connie Devanney, an outstanding singer with great versatility. Often she sounds as smooth as the Pentangle's Jacqui McShee, other times as rough as Janis Joplin. When the males join in, the result is reminiscent of the folk-rock harmonies of early Jefferson Airplane.

The best song on Flashes is "Dark World," which ABC released as a single. Unfortunately, it was not a hit.

Listening

Listening, like Bead Game, was a progressive Cambridge rock band that did not release a record until after the Bosstown hype had faded. Listening was built from the remains of two earlier (unrecorded) Boston bands. From Streetchoir came Peter Malick (guitar) and Michael Tschudin (vocals, vibes, keyboards). From the Grass Menagerie came Walter Powers (bass). The

fourth member of Listening was Ernie Kamanis (vocals, drums). Powers later became a member of the Velvet Underground. (The Grass Menagerie had also included Doug Yule, who later joined the Velvet Underground, and Peter Ivers, who later formed the Peter Ivers Band.) Listening's album is a blend of jazz-rock and acid rock, with long and well-done instrumental jams, including a distinctive organ sound. A non-LP single was also released.

The Orphans

The Orphans released two folk-rock singles on Epic in the spring and summer of 1968. These received some airplay and became regional hits. One of the B-sides, "Deserted," is one of the outstanding records to come out of the Bosstown period.

Four years later, the band returned as Orphan, on London Records. They released three LPs and sometimes joined forces with Jonathan Edwards.

Orpheus

Orpheus, earlier known as the Mods, consisted of Bruce Arnold (guitar, vocals), Jack McKenes (guitar, vocals), Eric Gulliksen (bass, vocals), and Harry Sandler (drums, vocals). At the time they released their first album, they had not yet played together publicly--a fact that says much about both the design and execution of the "Bosstown Sound."

On record, Orpheus's folk roots were of course audible, but shoved to the background in favor of a soft rock-easy listening sound. Their first three albums, although each has its moments, are virtually indistinguishable from each other in their overall texture. Native Bostonian Jon Landau, the Rolling Stone reviewer who panned MGM's three

initial Bosstown albums, found Orpheus's the least objectionable because at least they played "good schlock." In doing so, they were consistent and predictable.

On the other hand, their packaging was deceptive. Orpheus's eponymous debut album had psychedelic cover art that hardly fit the MOR pop contained in the grooves. In addition, the album was very short, lasting scarcely 25 minutes. Nevertheless, the album peaked at #119 and resided on the Billboard chart for 14 weeks. The first Orpheus single, "Can't Find the Time," was a regional hit upon its release in 1968 and surprisingly hit the national charts in August 1969, where it remained seven weeks, peaking at #80 and making it the biggest hit single to come out of the Bosstown Sound. A second single from the first album, "I've Never Seen Love Like This," did not chart. In March 1968, Billboard reported that Orpheus was to be featured in an ABC-TV special called The Great Mating Game.[13] I have not been able to determine whether such a program actually aired.

The second Orpheus album, Ascending, was very similar to the first, right down to the deceptive psychedelic cover art. A new twist, however, was the inclusion of cover versions of "Walk Away Renee" and "She's Not There"--both somewhat arresting. Ascending occupied the album chart for 12 weeks in fall 1968 and peaked at #159.

No singles were drawn from Ascending, but "Brown Arms in Houston," which would appear on the next album, Joyful, was eventually released and made it to #91 on the pop chart in late spring 1969.

Joyful came out shortly after the summer 1969 revival of "Can't Find the Time." Despite this boost, the new album barely cracked the album chart at #198 for one week. A new single, "By the Size of My Shoes," failed to make the charts.

A fourth album, again called Orpheus and released in 1971, found the band on a new label (Bell) with a drastically different lineup. Only Bruce Arnold remained from the original band. He was joined by Steve Martin (vocals), Elliot Sherman (keyboards), Howard Hersh (bass), K.P. Burke (harmonica), and Bernard Purdie (drums). Only Martin and Arnold are pictured on the album cover, suggesting that the other musicians served the role of backup band (and Hersh and Purdie, at least, were session musicians).

Martin had written songs for previous Orpheus albums, and he wrote or co-wrote all the songs on this album. Arnold, the most prolific songwriter on the old Orpheus albums, did none of the writing on the new one. The new Orpheus dabbled in country-rock and sometimes sounded a bit funky, but despite the facelift they remained firmly at the soft end of the rock spectrum. Bell released a single, but neither it nor the album caught on.

Orpheus did not quite make it to the big time, but they did manage to release more albums than any other Bosstown band. As formulaic as their records were, the singing was always excellent and the band often made very effective use of quietness. Harry Sandler later became road manager for Stevie Nicks.

Alan Lorber produced all four Orpheus albums, as well as all three Ultimate Spinach albums and the albums by Chamaeleon Church and Puff. While this was going on, he also produced records by singer Bobby Callender. Lorber released at least four singles and two albums as a recording artist from 1963 to 1969. Prior to Bosstown, he reportedly had produced Clairol commercials and several hit records (the identity of which I have not been able to find out). He was represented by a

public relations firm, and he and his projects are mentioned frequently in trade journal articles from 1967 to 1969. After Bosstown, he produced a sleazy spoken-word album called The Groupies, which consisted of female groupies talking about their experiences. In the late 1970s, he produced records by the band Free Beer.

Phluph

"Cambridge comes and conquers. Phluph has fired the sound heard 'round the world. The British (and San Francisco) are on the run. Phluph, the first Boston group recorded by a major recording company, is the originator not the imitator." So said the liner notes to Phluph's only album. As it happens, the record is a good punkadelic album, with echoes of the Five Americans in the vocals and the Animals and Music Machine in the instrumentation. The anonymous organist makes good use of classical riffs and off-the-wall frills. Phluph's members were Benson Blake IV, Lee Dudley, John Pell, and Joel Maisano. The liner notes do not say who played what. The band released two singles drawn from the album.

Puff

Puff had begun as the Rockin' Ramrods, a garage band that released several singles, including the regional hit "Bright Lit Blue Skies." As Puff, under the tutelage of producer Alan Lorber, they settled into a bubblegum sound, with occasional psychedelic touches. They released one album and one single.

The members of Puff were Vin Campisi (guitar), Jim Mandell (keyboards, flute, vocals), David-Allan Ryan (bass, vocals), and Robert Henderson (drums, vocals). All songs on their album were written by Ronn Campisi, Vin's brother who had been the bassist when the band was called

the Rockin' Ramrods.

Bill Linnane was originally the leader and lead guitarist of the Ramrods. Lenny Cerelli later replaced him. The Ramrods were "discovered" by singer Freddy Cannon, who boosted their career. They reportedly appeared in the movie East Is East, along with Peter and Gordon. I have not been able to verify the existence of this film, but it may be the same as a film called Just for You.

A band named Puff reportedly recorded an album for the Prophesy label in 1971. I am trying to determine if it is the same band.

Teddy and the Pandas

Teddy Dewart and his band hailed from Beverly, Massachusetts. In 1966, their song "Once Upon a Time," a hit on a local label, was picked up by Musicor. It and the follow-up, "We Can't Go On This Way," both "bubbled under" the Hot 100 chart. After two more tries on Musicor, and one on the local Timbri label, the band released an album and single on Tower, during the winding down of the Bosstown hype. By then, Dewart had left the band, but he appeared on the album as a guest artist. The band at that point included Al Lawrence (vocals), "Dickie" Guerrette (keyboards, vocals), Billy Corelle (bass, vocals), Paul Rivers (guitar, vocals), and Jerry La Brecque (drums, vocals). The album, Basic Magnetism, is pleasing pop with good vocals and a few interesting psychedelic effects and gimmicks.

Ultimate Spinach

Ultimate Spinach was the paradigmatic Bosstown band, bringing together three quintessential elements: MGM Records, producer Alan Lorber,

and psychedelic pretentiousness. They began as Underground Cinema, but this apparently was too tame a name. Members for their first album were Ian Bruce-Douglas (vocals, keyboards, and several other instruments), Barbara Hudson (vocals, guitar), Keith Lahteinen (vocals, drums), Richard Nese (bass), and Geoffrey Winthrop (vocals, lead guitar, sitar). The auteur of the group was Bruce-Douglas (real name Ian Bruce-Douglas Wise), who wrote all the songs, arranged them, and wrote the sprawling, cosmic liner notes, filled with phrases like: "Ultimate Spinach is mind food . . . let the music reach into your depths with a candle and light up what has been dark for too long . . . take what we give you, because we give it totally for you, but protect our gift, keep it close to you, and above all, let us help you find your own real beauty, so that others, in turn, may grow beautiful in your presence."

The album itself was similarly psychobabble-delic, with a flower-child sensibility that today seems funny, charming, and ridiculous. The music often resembles Strawberry Alarm Clock, early Country Joe and the Fish, and Jefferson Airplane. Singer Barbara Hudson seems underused, a trend that would continue on their later records. The first album spent 24 weeks on the Billboard chart, peaking at #34--the highest position for any Bosstown album.

Behold & See, the second album, was released late in 1968. It was musically as flamboyant as the first album, but the cover art was very plain, with no philosophical ramblings and, indeed, no liner notes. No band members were listed except Bruce-Douglas, again credited with writing and arranging all songs. (Vibrations reported in July that Jimmy Thompson, formerly with Butter, had joined Ultimate Spinach as lead guitarist.[14])

Behold & See cracked the album chart for two weeks, reaching #198--their last chart appearance.

A third album, eponymous like the first, was released in 1969. The band had an entirely new lineup except for Barbara Hudson. Most significantly, Ian Bruce-Douglas was gone. The new band members were Jeff Baxter (guitars, vocals), Mike Levine (bass), Russ Levine (drums), Ted Myers (vocals, guitar), and Tony Scheuren (keyboards, guitar, vocals). Baxter later played with Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers. Mike Levine later joined Triumph. Myers had written "Back Door Blues" for the Lost, and Ultimate Spinach covered it on this album. Myers and Scheuren had both played with Chamaeleon Church.

The third album contains several good songs in the old Ultimate Spinach style, especially the dreamy "Happiness Child." There are also several numbers that reach into country, blues, and rock 'n' roll. These are generally not very successful, although their cover of "Romeo and Juliet" is well done and was released as their only single.

A band called the Raggamuffins issued two folk- and pop-rock singles on the Seville label in 1967. I am trying to determine whether this is the same band referred to in the Newsweek article on Bosstown (but spelled "Ragamuffins"). A band called the Cloud reportedly released at least one single on Audio Fidelity in 1969. I am trying to determine whether the record exists and whether the band is the same as one mentioned in ads in Avatar. Several other bands active around 1968 seem to have been influential even though they apparently did not release any records. These include Butter, the J. Geils Blues Band, and the Hallucinations. The latter band included Stephen Bladd and Peter Wolf, both of whom later

joined forces with Geils in the J. Geils Band--forming one of the few noticeable links between the Bosstown era and the nationally successful Boston bands of the 1970s.

Notes

[1] See Neal Umphred, "Milli Vanilli and the Integrity of the Popular Music Industry," Goldmine, January 25, 1991, p. 5; and Neal Umphred, "Among Those Afraid of Losing Their Ground: The Byrds on Record and Disc," Goldmine, January 11, 1991, pp. 14-15.

[2] My previous research is summarized in "The Bosstown Sound," conference paper, American Culture Association, New Orleans, 1988, available as ERIC document ED 292 153; and in a forthcoming article in Goldmine. Portions of the present paper draw from these previous works. See the ERIC document for more complete citations of published works.

[3] Billboard, January 20, 1968, pp. 32-33.

[4] Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977), reference to "Boss Town" on p. 77.

[5] Billboard, May 25, 1968, pp. 36-37.

[6] Avatar, June 9-22, 1967, p. 5.

[7] In addition to sources listed in my ERIC paper, other major sources, from which my new information comes, include album covers; David Johnson, "Bosstown in the Glory Years: A General Survey of Boston Rock," Who Put the Bomp, Fall 1975, pp. 32-34; Joel Bernstein, "The New England Scene," Who Put the Bomp, Fall 1975, pp. 34-36; Michel Ruppli, comp., Atlantic Records: A Discography, 4 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Clea Simon and Brett Milano, Boston Rock Trivia (Boston: Quinlan Press, 1985); Michel Ruppli, comp., with Bob Porter, The Clef/Verve Labels: A Discography, Volume II: The MGM Era (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Charles P. Lamey, "NRBQ: Here Comes Terry, Here Comes Al, Here Comes Joey, Here Comes Tommy," Goldmine, May 18, 1990, pp. 12-22, 84, 88; and an insert in the LP Bay State Rock, Volume 1: The Sixties, Star-Rhythm LP 101, n.d.

[8] "Bagatelle to Play Song in Movie," Billboard, July 13, 1968, p. 78.

[9] "MGM Push on Beacon St. Union," Billboard, February 10, 1968, p. 6.

[10] Joseph Tortelli, "Beacon Street Union: The Dream Died in Bosstown," Goldmine, December 18, 1987, p. 28.

[11] Pauline Rivelli, "Sham," Jazz & Pop, February 1968, pp. 27-29.

[12] Vibrations, July 1968, unpaginated.

[13] "From the Music Capitals of the World," Billboard, March 30, 1968, p. 57.

[14] Vibrations, July 1968, unpaginated.

Discography

The Apple Pie Motherhood Band:
LP: The Apple Pie Motherhood Band, Atlantic SD 8189, 1968
LP: Apple Pie, Atlantic SD 8233, 1969
45: Long Live Apple Pie/ Flight Path, Atlantic 2477, 1968

The Bagatelle:
LP: 11 PM Saturday, ABC ABCS-646, 1968
45: Such a Fuss About Sunday/ What Can I Do, ABC 11063, 1968

The Beacon Street Union:
LP: The Eyes of the Beacon Street Union, MGM E/SE-4517, 1968
LP: The Clown Died in Marvin Gardens, MGM SE-4568, 1968
45: South End Incident/ Speed Kills, MGM 13865, 1967
45: Blue Suede Shoes/ Four Hundred and Five, MGM 13935, 1968
45: Mayola/ May I Light Your Cigarette, MGM 14012, 1969
45: Lord Why Is It So Hard/ Can't Find My Fingers, RTP 10011, 1969
As Eagle:
LP: Come Under Nancy's Tent, Janus JLS 3011, 1970
45: Kicking It Back to You/ Come In, It;s All for Free, Janus 113, 1970
45: Working Man/ Brown Hair, Janus 135, 1970

Bead Game:
LP: Welcome, Avco Embassy AVE 33009, 1970
45: Sweet Medusa/ Country Girls, Avco Embassy 4539, 1970

Bo Grumpus:
LP: Before the War, Atco SD-246, 1968
As Jolliver Arkansaw:
LP: Home, Bell 6031, 1969
45: Lisa My Love/ Mr. Brennan, Bell 802, 1969

Chamaeleon Church:
LP: Chamaeleon Church, MGM SE-4574, 1968
45: Camillia Is Changing/ Your Golden Love, MGM 13929, 1968

Timothy Clover:
As the Cambridge Concept of Timothy Clover:
LP: A Harvard Square Affair, Tower ST 5114, 1968
As Timothy Clover:
45: Trolley Car Line/ Great World Next Door, Tower 408, 1968

Earth Opera:
LP: Earth Opera, Elektra EKS-74016, 1968
LP: The Great American Eagle Tragedy, Elektra EKS-74038, 1969
45: The American Eagle Tragedy/ When You Were Full of Wonder, Elektra 45636, 1968
45: Home to You/ Alfie Finney, Elektra 45650, 1969
Tom Paxton:
LP: Morning Again, Elektra EKS-74019, 1968

Eden's Children:
LP: Eden's Children, ABC ABC/ABCS-624, 1968
LP: Sure Looks Real, ABC ABCS-652, 1968
45: Goodbye Girl/ Just Let Go, ABC 11053

Groundspeed:
45: L-12-East/ In a Dream, Decca 32344, 1968

The Ill Wind:
LP: Flashes, ABC ABCS-641, 1968
45: In My Dark World/ Walkin' and Singin', ABC 11107, 1968

Listening:
LP: Listening, Vanguard VSD 6504, 1968
45: Hello You/ Life Stories, Vanguard 35094, 1971

Alan Lorber as recording artist: (Of the following records, I have only seen The Lotus Palace, and it is credited to the Alan Lorber Orchestra.)
LP: The Lotus Palace, Verve V/V6-8711, 1967
LP: The Changing Times of Bob Dylan, MGM SE-4647, 1969
45: Dance Romeo Dance/ Serenata Bossa Nova, Kapp 523, 1963
45: Hang On to a Dream/ Up, Up and Away, Verve 10537, 1967
45: The Look of Love/ Mas Que Nada, Verve 10538, 1967
45: Congress Alley/ Massachusetts, MGM 13926, 1968

The Lost:
45: Maybe More Than You/ Back Door Blues, Capitol 5519, 1965
45: Violet Gown/ Mean Motorcycle, Capitol 5708, 1965
45: Violet Gown/ No Reason Why, Capitol 5725, 1966

The Orphans:
45: There's No Flowers in My Garden/ One Spoken Word, Epic 10288, 1968
45: This Is the Time/ Deserted, Epic 10348, 1968

Orpheus:
LP: Orpheus, MGM E/SE-4524, 1968
LP: Ascending, MGM SE-4569, 1968
LP: Joyful, MGM SE-4599, 1969
LP: Orpheus, Bell 6061, 1971
45: Can't Find the Time/ Lesley's World, MGM 13882, 1968
45: I've Never Seen Love Like This/ Congress Alley, MGM 13947, 1968
45: Brown Arms in Houston/ I Can Make the Sun Rise, MGM 14022, 1969
45: By the Size of My Shoes/ Joyful, MGM 14139, 1969
45: Sweet Life/ Big Green Pearl, Bell 45128, 1971

Phluph:
LP: Phluph, Verve V/V6-5054, 1968
45: Doctor Mind/ Another Day, Verve 10564, 1968
45: In Her Way/ Patterns, Verve 10575, 1968

Puff:
As the Rockin' Ramrods:
45: Jungle Call/ Indian Giver, Explosive F-101/02, 1963
45: She Lied/ Girl Can't Help It, Bob-Bon 1315, 1964
45: I Wanna Be Your Man/ I'll Be on My Way, Plymouth 2961/62, 1965
45: Wild About You/ Cry in My Room, Southern Sound 205, 1965
45: Don't Fool with Fu Manchu/ Tears Melt the Stones, Claridge 301, 1965
45: Play It/ Got My Mojo Workin', Claridge 317, 1966

Puff (continued):
As the Ramrods:
45: Bright Lit Blue Skies/ Mister Wind, Plymouth 2963/64, 1966
45: Flowers in My Mind/ Mary, Mary, Plymouth 2965/66, 1966
As Puff:
LP: Puff, MGM SE-4622, 1969
45: Looking in My Window/ Rainy Day, MGM 14040, 1969
Casey Paxton: (Backup band is the Rockin' Ramrods.)
45: East Is East/ Baby Baby Go Go, Claridge 308, 1966

The Raggamuffins: (possibly not Bosstown)
45: Four Days of Rain/ It Wasn't Happening at All, Seville 141, 1967.
45: Hate to See a Good Thing Have to Go/ Parade of Uncertainty, Seville 143, 1967

Teddy and the Pandas:
LP: Basic Magnetism, Tower ST 5125, 1968
45: Once Upon a Time/ Out the Window, Coristine 574, 1966
45: Once Upon a Time/ Out the Window, Musicor 1176, 1966
45: We Can't Go On This Way/ Smokey Fire, Musicor 1190, 1966
45: Searchin' for the Good Times/ Sunnyside Up, Musicor 1212, 1966
45: The Lovelight/ Day in the City, Timbri 101, 1967
45: Childhood Friends/ 68 Days Til September, Tower 433, 1968

Ultimate Spinach:
LP: Ultimate Spinach, MGM E/SE-4518, 1968
LP: Behold & See, MGM SE-4570, 1968
LP: Ultimate Spinach, MGM SE-4600, 1969
45: (Just Like) Romeo and Juliet/ Some-Days You Just Can't Win, MGM 14023, 1969